

**Town of Lincoln**

**Budget Board Meeting**

**March 23, 2005**

**Members Present:**

**Roberta Gosselin Jack Newman Cheryl Ethier Joe Dziobek Linda Noble**

**Carl Brunetti Ken Booth Claudette Lussier Mary Varr Bob Ericson**

**Members Absent:**

**Dave Hartley**

**Meeting began at 7:35 with the Pledge of Allegiance led by High School Principal Bob Martin.**

**Joe Dziobek made a motion to change the agenda so that the school budget would be discussed first because the School Committee and School Department were present.**

**Jack Newman seconded the motion. The agenda was changed by a vote of 10-0.**

**Ken Booth turned the meeting over to Cheryl Ethier, School Subcommittee Chair, to discuss the school budget. Cheryl stated that the School Subcommittee had each taken the responsibility of analyzing the budget of a particular school. The School Subcommittee decided to go through the schools one at a time with**

the School Department and School Committee present to ask any questions that had been derived from analyzing each budget.

The Superintendent requested that the Budget Board address any questions pertaining to capital first so that Angelo Menucci, Maintenance, could be free to leave.

\$25,000 for ADA compliance is for unanticipated compliance issues that may come up anywhere in the entire school system.

For Inventory Control, the schools decided to with a 4-wheel-drive pick-up truck with a cab and plow attachment instead of a van.

Bob Ericson asked if the difference in the vehicle would affect inventory control at all. Angelo replied that since they are both basically the same loading height, it wouldn't make a difference.

The water fountains are so heavily used that replacement parts do not work. The money requested for new water fountains would purchase 3 new ADA compliant, flush-mounted water fountains.

Cheryl Ethier noted that the School Subcommittee did receive the copies of bids for the basketball court at Northern, and Angelo noted that the court would be off to the far side and away from the building.

Ken Booth asked whether it would be more worthwhile to do more than one area within the school system and hire a contractor for blacktopping. Angelo noted that it would be expensive to hire a

contractor that way because a lot of cost would be incurred moving equipment from place to place.

Angelo noted that most of the carpeting that is still existent is covering asbestos, and so if it needs replacement it has to be considered that it will need abatement as well as replacement.

Tile will be used wherever possible for better indoor air quality, but Angelo did note that tile and carpeting do have about the same life expectancy because after a while tiling tends to curl and yellow.

There is a smaller lawn tractor that is currently being used, but a larger one would allow more schools to be done as well as the fields, for example, Lime Acres and Manville Memorial Park.

Ken Booth noted that the municipal side of town does have tractors that are sometimes free for use and they could maybe team up. Angelo felt that the best way to get the lawn mowing done would be with the schools' own equipment and whenever it needs it, not when the town's schedule permits.

The lawn tractor will be \$40,000 and then a very small amount to buy it out at the end of the lease.

Jack Newman asked whether the piece of equipment in question was worth \$40,000. Angelo replied that it was.

The goal is to have 2 pieces of equipment stay at the High School because it is a good place to centralize them if needed for the other schools, and one piece of equipment will go to the new middle

**school.**

**Linda Noble asked whether there was adequate storage at the locations to store the equipment.**

**Angelo replied that there was and that it was important not to leave the equipment outside.**

**The schools are responsible for preparing the Saylesville field for play in the beginning of the season, but not for the maintenance of it. Also, at Lonsdale, the schools maintain the front of the school but Parks and Recreations maintains the field.**

**In regards to the aerator, the company that sells them recommends using them once a month on the lawn, but Angelo noted that with the high traffic that the fields get, they probably need a lot more than once a month, and that in the very busy and hot season, it could be done up to twice a week. The amount requested in the budget is for doing it once a month.**

**Linda Noble asked if there is any decision regarding what will be done with the building that currently houses the middle school portion of the school once the new middle school is built.**

**The original plan was to expand the high school into the middle school portion of the building and also have some office space and some rooms for Special Education. The School Department now feels that the Administration building should be separate and not have office space conjoined with the High School.**

Jack Newman questioned capital improvements at the old middle school because it is not know what will be done with the building yet. Angelo stated that the gymnasium was going to stay intact regardless of what was done with the building, and he recommended replacing the gymnasium doors because they were not compliant with code and replacing lighting and painting as well.

Joe Dziobek questioned which capital improvement projects would be part of the \$34 million bond and the \$5 million bond and what the priorities are for capital improvements.

Angelo stated that there are some projects that overlap between the bond and the budget request such as part of the High School carpet abatement, simply because he feels they need to be done immediately.

Carl Brunetti noted that some things, such as building siding at Northern, should be in the bond.

Cheryl Ethier noted that the Budget Board would like an update on the fire code implications and an update on the Capital Reserve Account. Lori Miller stated that that information would be given.

The Superintendent noted that the architect for the new middle school did go through each other school for fire code purposes and he came back with a number of \$16 million to do all of the projects that needed to be done, which is triple what the \$5 million bond allows.

**Roberta requested a status report for capital improvements and what is still left to be done.**

**Claudette Lussier questioned the fact that nothing was shown under the Middle School for fire code upgrades. This was because it is considered one building with the High School.**

**Saylesville Elementary was analyzed by Linda Noble.**

**Linda Noble asked what Line 420, Library Books was specifically for. It is for the development of classroom libraries as part of an initiative to make Saylesville high performing and improving.**

**Line 541, Overhead Projectors was questioned because some overhead projectors had already been purchased. The goal is to have an overhead projector in every classroom.**

**Also, there are Staff Book Clubs, Seminars, Reading and Writing Institute, and many other initiatives to assist literacy.**

**There also need to be books for independent reading and not just textbooks.**

**Joe Dziobek asked whether the classroom libraries would be collectively used like a regular library. There is a need for both, a collective and classroom libraries.**

**The goal is to have 1,000 to 2,000 books per classroom, and although there has been some initiative with fundraising already, the project needs help from the budget.**

**Roberta Gosselin asked how the budget process had worked for the new person in charge of the project. It had not been her budget as**

she came into the position in August and a lot of ordering had been done in July.

There are periodical reports from Lori Miller and the School Department to make them aware of how much money is left to spend, but these reports come less frequently in the end because of the fear that it will all be spent and that it may be needed to offset issues in other lines.

Roberta Gosselin asked where the spending is at currently. Jeff Weiss replied that he expects to have a \$10,000 surplus and that reports have improved and become more detailed.

Lori Miller noted that she is running short-staffed and does have an accountant who is hired for about 5 hours a month to help with bank reconciliations.

Linda Noble asked whether it the initiative for classroom libraries was a system-wide reading program. Saylesville was the worst off, but they do plan to enhance the libraries with core books as part of the English/Language Arts curriculum revisions.

In regards to the Reading Specialist position, Joe Dziobek asked what the School Committee and School Department made of the fact that 1/3 of high school students are reading below grade-level.

Linda Newman stated that a new program initiative will have 3 assessments of reading between grades K-12 and that the

mechanism for identifying students throughout as well as new requirements to report findings are reasons why this is now known. Personal Literacy Plans and tracking will help with the findings that students are reading below grade-level.

Also, the new English/Language Arts curriculum should be ready this summer.

The schools are using the reading teachers acquired last year to model strategies and to administer assessments.

One thing that also can be done is to increase non-fiction books in the libraries.

Jack Newman asked when the English/Language Arts curriculum would be completed. A complete draft should be completed by June 31st.

Carl Brunetti analyzed Central Elementary.

Carl questioned Educational Equipment. This includes the purchase of projectors and white boards. The Principal of Central Elementary noted that about 10 teachers do not have screens for their projectors and that many do not have white boards. About 3 new projectors are also needed.

Mary Varr analyzed Northern Elementary and Northern Early Learning Center.

Mary asked whether or not Northern would also be going with the



initiative of classroom libraries. The Principal of Northern noted that she felt that there can never be enough books for the children to read and that currently the school is subscribing to a website where they can download copies of books and that if teachers have classroom libraries, they purchase them themselves.

Mary Ann Roll stated that she felt that some things are the responsibility of the town and not the teachers or parents to pay for or to fundraise for, such as books.

Lori Miller noted that if an area is in curriculum review or has not yet been through curriculum review, the schools do not order new textbooks for that area, but there are some textbooks that are in extreme disrepair.

Roberta Gosselin asked if the current cycle of curriculum revision and textbook purchases would continue once Linda Newman has retired. The Superintendent said that it would and that there is strong initiative to keep the cycle going.

Lori Miller will provide a list by grant of what the schools currently receive for grant money.

Jack Newman asked whether the grants are guaranteed year after year. Lori Miller stated that in most cases they are, she has noticed a reduction in the amount of some.

**The Budget Board welcomed public comment and questions.**

**Benny Sisto found the lack of instructional materials appalling and thought that the Budget Board and School Committee should have a deal to fund these things if the School Committee agrees to restrict the funds to certain things.**

**Benny also felt that the schools should do a fixed asset inventory at the beginning and end of each year.**

**Marco Ferretti, a Pediatrician and Parent, spoke for playgrounds at Northern. He noted that kids need increased activity during their day at school and that a playground would give them more exercise.**

**Martha Kwartta noted that she once observed children at recess and that they didn't have structured play, which a playground would provide for them.**

**Carol McCourt noted that the parents should not have to fundraise or pay for the playground projects, but that the town should be taking the responsibility for it.**

**Kathy Elder, a teacher, concurred that children do need to have exercise as a part of their daily curriculum.**

**Mary Ann Roll felt that Lincoln has done a good job with providing playgrounds, and she noted that Cumberland does not have any playgrounds unless the parents raise the funds to put them in.**

**Mary Ann thought that the problem was upkeep and maintenance the playgrounds once they are in, and she noted that the playground that was just taken down had not been operational for 5 years.**

**Jack Newman analyzed the Middle School.**

**Lori Miller noted that some of the positions are for children who move up from the Elementary schools and need assistance along the way.**

**Lori Miller noted that it was not possible at this time to give a head count of the children in alternative schools because of confidentiality issues. Georgia Fortunato was on vacation, and Lori stated that she would discuss it with Georgia when she returned.**

**The .5 Guidance Counselor is for Middle School transition and it will be a 1.0 position next year. It is a full-time position for half of the year currently.**

**In justifying the increases for Principal and Assistants, there were no performance reviews but the schools feel that one of the reasons for high turnover rates in administrators is salary.**

**An analysis of surrounding communities by Jim DiPrete found Lincoln at the low end and a recommended increase by him would bring Lincoln up to the mean rates.**

**\$27,000 was spent on 14 administrators in raises in salaries. Some received more than others because some were newer positions who**

**were already at a fairly reasonable rate.**

**There were also some changes made in the wording of the contracts that will be stricter regarding performance evaluations.**

**Roberta Gosselin asked if all of the positions are filled. They are not, the High School ice Principal, Assistant Superintendent and Assistant Principal at Northern are all still open.**

**There are also some retirements and 4 people out on sabbatical.**

**Bob Martin, High School Principal, noted that the first choice for Assistant Vice Principal did not accept the position so they decided to wait to fill the position until April when graduate candidates will be applying.**

**Cheryl Ethier asked what the requirements were for administrators and whether the school needed a Dean, 2 Vice Principals and a Principal.**

**There is no minimum of administrators, but the SALT Survey suggested that administration should be larger and Jeff Weiss felt that the Dean of Students has made a tremendous improvement in the school.**

**Linda Noble asked what the difference between Vice Principal and Dean was. The Dean of Students handles the more social events, is proactive, and handles minor discipline problems which frees up the Vice Principal to deal with the larger issues and to perform evaluations and school reform.**

**Also, the resource officers have lowered the amount of fighting that occurs in the school.**

**Roberta Gosselin noted that the two police officers at the high school are there on a grant that is due to expire and she wondered who would be paying for them once it did expire.**

**It should be the responsibility of the municipal side to pay for them.**

**Jack Newman asked when the last time office supplies and general supplies were put out to bid. Lori Miller replied that they are put out to bid each year, but that last year the bids received were not good so they teamed up with a Collaborative team to get a better deal, which was for 2 years.**

**Joe Dziobek analyzed the High School.**

**Joe asked who determines what qualifies for a sabbatical and if it is unusual to leave on a sabbatical.**

**Lori Miller noted that this is a banner year for sabbaticals and that there may be 3 or more teachers leaving on sabbatical.**

**Joe asked if there were substitute teachers paid during that time. They are paid \$32,000 - \$33,000 and also a pension plan.**

**Roberta Gosselin asked who represents the school when teachers are in negotiations. They currently have an attorney who is very good, but there are contracts that existed before he worked on them.**

**Roberta Gosselin asked whether teachers are eligible to receive health insurance until they are 65 if they retire. They are, but if they have put in less than 20 years, they do not receive 100% benefits.**

**Joe Dziobek asked what triggers the addition of a Teachers Assistant. Lori Miller replied that it is IEP driven.**

**Joe Dziobek asked how many children in the school system have IEPs. Lori Miller replied that there are about 800, which also correlates with the issue of the children reading below grade level.**

**The question was raised as to who controls the assignments of the resource officers.**

**Bill Martin replied they are proactive in the corridors, responding to concerns, but they do not have a set schedule. They are at the center of the building at the end of the day when the students are exiting.**

**Lori Miller noted that whether or not the software is installed soon will depend upon the outsourcing of payroll, which they are going out to bid for.**

**Lori Miller will meet with the Worker's Compensation company next week to determine rates.**

**For Health Care, the rate is estimated at 4.7%**

**The Budget will be completed on April 8th, and Lori Miller requested a**

**spreadsheet with the Budget Board's recommendations.**

**The Budget Board welcomed public comment and questions.**

**Benny Sisto felt that the School Department needed a head bookkeeper who could oversee the two workers and let Lori Miller act as Manager.**

**Benny thought that the town should think about outsourcing snowplowing and lawn mowing as a cheaper alternative to the current system.**

**Also, Benny thought that organic treatments for the lawns would be better than chemicals.**

**Benny thought that the Administration building should be made into a building for special needs students and that administration could be in the current middle school.**

**Jeff Weiss noted that the architect for the middle school went through and did an analysis of the fire codes and estimated \$1.5 million for the upgrades. The town then requested that the architect go through again with the Fire Chiefs and the Fire Marshall and the estimate at that time was \$500,000.**

**Carl Brunetti made a motion to postpone the remainder of the agenda for the March 24th meeting.**

**Bob Ericson seconded the motion.**

**Joe Dziobek made a motion to adjourn**

**Carl Brunetti seconded the motion.**

**The meeting adjourned at 10:35.**